Come Alive – Part 3

# Easter

# (Luke 24:13-32)

For centuries on this weekend, the people of God have celebrated the fact that Jesus is risen, and so today, even more than any other day, we want to feel it, believe it, see it, and embrace it. We want to Come Alive to the significance of Easter, because the stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty, and Jesus isn’t there. Jesus Christ our King is risen and so, today we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, our Lord, the King of kings, the Prince of peace, the Holy One. Jesus Christ is risen. And everyone said, “He is risen, indeed.”

Today, we’re going to learn to see God at work in our everyday lives. And so, if you have your Bible with you, please open to Luke chapter 24, and we’re going to examine the story of two guys walking along on a day when everything changed for them. We’re going to look at the story of two guys who saw the risen Christ but they didn’t recognize him. I think this is extremely practical for us today, because the reality is, sometime you can look at something, you can see it, but you don’t really see it. You see it but you don’t really engage with it.

In Luke chapter 24, we’ll start in verse 13, where the Bible says, “Now that same day.” In other words, that same day that the stone was rolled away, that same day that Jesus tomb was found empty, that same day that it was reported that he had risen. This was the first Easter Sunday.

“That same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened” (Luke 24:13-14).

Now, it sounds like they’re just walking along, shooting the breeze like we might talk about sports, politics, the weather, or whatever; but in reality, their conversation was much deeper than that. You see, for centuries there had been ancient prophecies that had been handed down from generation to generation that one-day God would send a Savior, a Messiah to bring everlasting peace into their lives. And so, their parents, their grandparents, and their great grandparents had talked about this Messiah who would bring about the kingdom of God, this Messiah who would be the Savior of the world. And these two guys, had grown up with this dream, hoping, praying, and expecting this Messiah, when this guy by the name of Jesus from Nazareth showed up.

Now, Jesus was unlike anyone they had ever seen, he taught like one with authority, he performed great miracles, and so they began wondering, “Could this be the One?” Just maybe this is the One?” And so, they began to follow him, they put all their faith in him, believing that Jesus was actually the promised Messiah. But the problem was that just days before they had watched their dream, their Messiah, be tried, condemned, and crucified on a cross; and so, all of their hopes and dreams had died with him. Suddenly, they realized this isn’t the path that we had hoped to follow, this isn’t going the way that we’d hoped it would, this wasn’t in the master plan, we just thought things would be so much better.

And the truth is, that many of us are in a season like that right now. Maybe, you thought everything was going well, but then you got that text, that phone call, or that letter and it wasn’t what you’d hoped for. Maybe, you’d invested years in that relationship or that job. You put all of your eggs in this one basket and it didn’t work out. And so, now you’re wondering what to do, where do you go from here because this is what you’d planned on. You thought that you were going to be enjoying this season of your life, but things aren’t turning out the way that you thought they would. This is where these guys are, they’d put all of their hope in Jesus as the Messiah, they’d quit their jobs, they’d followed him, but just days earlier their hopes were crushed, their dreams destroyed, and so they’re walking along talking about these things. And verse 15 tells us,

“As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them…” (Luke 24:15-16).

And so, Jesus is walking with them, he was with them, but they didn’t see him. Now, we don’t know why “but they were kept from recognizing him”. You know, maybe Jesus wanted to teach them something, maybe he wanted to surprise them, but whatever it was, for whatever reason, God wasn’t letting them see who Jesus was. He was right there walking with them, and yet, they were unable to see him. They were walking along, discouraged and devastated, when Jesus enters into the conversation. In verse 17, he asked them,

"What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still; their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:17-18).

In other words, they’re like, “Haven’t you heard? Don’t you watch the news?” And you can just imagine the thoughts, the memories, all that is going on inside of the mind of Jesus at that moment. You know, “If you guys only knew what I’ve been through this weekend, but I never gave up. When I was tempted by Satan, I remained strong. In the garden, I was hesitant because I knew the pain I was about to experience, but I prayed and our Father strengthened me. I committed to stay the course and said, “Father, not my will, but yours be done.” Even though they beat me and beat me, I didn’t give up because I loved you, I was thinking about you, and wanted to do this for you.”

“If only you knew how difficult it was to stay the course, but I didn’t waiver, and each time they whipped me, my only thought was, “This one is for you” because I knew that one day you’re going to be healed by the stripes on my back.” As they drove the stakes through my wrists and through my feet, it hurt so bad but I remembered that I was doing this for you. When they lifted me up on the cross, I could barely breathe, I was tempted to give up, I knew that with one word I could call on my Father, “and he would at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53). But I didn’t do it, I stayed the course, and yet, the most painful part was yet to come.

When I became sin and my Father turned away, I cried out in anguish, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And then, when the moment was right, at the appointed time, I called out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). And I breathed my last. I died and the whole world shook, but my story wasn’t over.

When everyone else was wondering, hurting, worrying, and praying, I was taking back the keys to death, hell, and the grave from Satan, our spiritual enemy. He’s been crushed, he’s been defeated, and I’m here, I’m alive, and in just a moment, you’ll see what it really means to Come Alive in me. You see, now you have access to the Father, now through my life, death, and resurrection, you can know that you’re forgiven, that your sins are cast away, and you can hear from God. You can understand the Scriptures; you can pray and God will move mountains. I’m here with you, look in my eyes, you don’t see it, but in a moment you’ll see.”

And so, Jesus is walking with them, but they don’t recognize him. Like many of us, they’re discouraged, hurting, alone, and afraid, because they didn’t realize, they didn’t recognize that Jesus was right there with them. You see, he was with them, but they didn’t see him. He had risen from the dead, he’s walking with them, and yet they didn’t recognize him. And then Jesus with a twinkle in his eye, trying to keep from laughing, asked in verse 19, "What things?"

 "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19).

In other words, they said, when he spoke, his word was powerful, it was like his words were piercing our hearts. It was like he knew things that no one could know, when he spoke, we were changed, and it was like God was speaking to us. He was powerful in word and deed, he made things happen, blind eyes were opened, deaf ears healed, the mute spoke, the dead were raised to life. This Jesus that we’re talking about was a prophet, who was powerful in word and deed. But there was a problem they said, there was a controversy among the people, there was a conspiracy, and in verse 20 they said,

“The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped…”

“But we’d hoped…” right there in that phrase “we’d hoped”, you see so many shattered dreams. They said,

“…We’d hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place” (Luke 24:20-21).

In other words, they were saying, it’s obvious that what we’d hoped for wasn’t going to happen. And some of you today, you’re in that season of “but we’d hoped” and this morning you might have lost all hope. I’m sure that many of you can remember a time when you came to the realization, “This is what I thought, but now it just doesn’t seem as if it’s going to happen.” “We’d hoped that he would, but he’s not.” “We’d hoped, but we can’t seem to…” “We’d hoped” and that’s where these guys were, they were walking along with the risen Christ, he was powerful in word and deed, but they couldn’t see him. In addition, they said, verse 22,

“Some of our women amazed us… they went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see" (Luke 24:22-24).

The tomb was empty, but him they did not see. He was risen, but they still couldn’t see. Jesus was with them, but they didn’t see him. How many of you know that God is often like that? You know, right now, in this moment, he’s with us, but we don’t see him.

Maybe you’ve noticed that it’s often hard to see God at work right now, in this moment in your life, you know that he’s there, because he promises that if you’re one of his…

“He’ll never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Again, in John chapter 14, Jesus promised,

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18).

And in Matthew chapter 28,

“Surely I am with you always…" (Matthew 28:20).

And yet, it’s so hard to see Jesus in this moment, as you are walking down the road, but when you look back in the rearview mirror, you can see that he was there all along! He was with you and we know that in all things…

“God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:29).

And so, as you look back, you can see that he was there when you were hurting, when you were lonely, and he was there comforting you in your hopelessness. You didn’t see it at the time, but as you look back you can see that he was with you.

And so, it’s as these two disciples were walking with Jesus, confused and struggling because they didn’t understand all that the prophets had spoken of, they didn’t understand what happened to the one they thought was the Messiah, but watch what Jesus says next, he said to them in verse 25,

“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

This is an amazing statement, an amazing gift, Jesus gave them clarity and understanding of all that was said in the Scriptures concerning himself. It was this lack of understanding that was the reason why they couldn’t deal with the events of Good Friday. It wasn’t because they hadn’t read the Word of God, it wasn’t because they didn’t believe the Scripture, it was simply because they had a partial understanding of the Scripture and a partial understanding is not enough. And so, Jesus opened their eyes to know his purpose for humanity, his purpose in history, and his purpose in redemption and eternity. This was an amazing gift, but he wasn’t done yet, because as they approached the village… verse 28 says,

“Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them” (Luke 24:28-29).

You know, by the time they get to the village, their hearts were literally burning, they’re on fire with that joy, that overwhelming joy of revelation, but watch what happens next, verse 30,

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (Luke 24:30).

Now, we don’t know why he would’ve distributed the bread, because in most every culture that would’ve been rude and inappropriate to allow a stranger to serve you at your own table. But for whatever reason, maybe because they’re so captivated with what Jesus was saying but they’d lost interest in eating, Jesus picks up the bread, he gives thanks, breaks it and give it to them. It was then that their eyes… “were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24:28-31).

All of a sudden there was a familiarity and they recognized him, but I had to question why now, why did they recognize him? Was it in the breaking of the bread, was it in the prayer, was it simply that God let them recognize them? The Bible doesn’t tell us, we don’t really know, and so maybe it was a little bit of each, but most likely it was the fact that in the flickering candlelight as he stretched at his hands to them that they saw the fresh wound in his wrist. Suddenly everything clicked, the graceful words, the depth of understanding, the breaking of the bread, the prayer, and the fresh wounds in his wrist. Instantly they were transformed from the depths of despair to eternal joy as they recognized him. Jesus was alive, but no sooner was there that recognition, then did he disappear from their sight.

Now, all of a sudden, it all made sense. Everything made sense, his body beaten, flogged, and scourged. The Messiah, their Savior, hanging on the cross, breathing his last, dead and buried. And they asked each other,

“They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

Did you ever have a moment like that, where your heart was burning within you? I pray that there may be some of you today, who for the first time are able to recognize him, understanding the Scriptures, and looking back you’ll be able to see him in the past and you’ll begin to recognize him in this moment.

This morning, I recognize Jesus in my past, and I’ve got eyes to see him in this moment. He’s here as we worship, as we engage with one another and as we serve. I see him in my weaknesses and in my failures. I see where he has strengthened me, where he built me up, and where he changed me to become more like himself. And I see Jesus in you, in your eyes, I see Jesus in your expressions, I see Jesus in the countenance on your faces as you let go of things of this world and fall more deeply in love with him. I see Jesus in the movement of people in this church, as they are realizing that the things of this world don’t matter, but living for the King of Kings is the only thing that matters. I see Jesus changing our church according to his will and purpose so that we can glorify him and make a difference in this community.

Like those two disciples, I can see Jesus all over the place, because I’ve got eyes to see, spiritual eyes. And some of you this morning, God wants to give you eyes to see, because the reality is that some of you, maybe you’ve heard the story of Jesus, you’ve seen a lot of Easters, but your mind is still not open to the truth of the gospel. You’ve heard the story of Jesus before, but you can’t really see how it applies to you, and until you can really see, until you can really understand, until you really seek to know him you won’t experience the life change, the privilege, and the benefits that Jesus desires to do in you. The psalmist said it this way,

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Psalms 103:2-5).

That’s such good news, and it’s so significant, because when you recognize that the tomb is empty, that Jesus is alive, you’ll be able to see, maybe for the first time, and you will know that you’re forgiven, you’re healed, and you can make a difference as you invest your life in eternal things.

The Bible says that Jesus, revealing himself to the disciples,

“Opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

And that’s what Jesus wants to do today, he wants to open your eyes and open your minds. That’s what he did then and that’s what will happen to some of you today. Jesus wants to open your mind so that as you seek him you can understand the Scriptures, and this is what he told them,

“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations” (Luke 24:46-47).

And that’s just what Jesus did, he rose from the dead, and now almost 2000 years later, that’s what we’re doing right now. Repentance and forgiveness of sins is being preached to all nations, right now through the use of technology, this message is recorded and is seen around the world. Jesus is being preached to all nations. He’s risen, he’s alive, and he’s here. Can you sense his presence?

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